

APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY
2014 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: WA State Employment Security Department

Application ID: 14ES156272

Program Name: Washington Reading Corps- Fixed

For the purpose of enhancing our programs by improving the quality and quantity of applications to the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), we are providing specific feedback regarding the strengths and weaknesses of this application. These comments are not meant to represent a comprehensive assessment; rather the analysis represents those elements that had the greatest bearing on the rating of the application. Please note that this feedback consists of summary comments from more than one reviewer. For this reason, some of the comments may seem to be inconsistent or contradictory. Comments are not representative of all of the information used in the final funding decision.

Reviewers' Summary Comments:

Strengths:

The applicant articulated the need for the program by providing local data with regards to percentages of fourth grade students reading at grade level based on socio-economic factors (i.e., percentage of middle to upper income fourth graders compared to percentage of low-income fourth graders). The applicant also cited national data to provide a broader context to the challenges that poor students have with reading.

Washington State applicant points to foundational research studies that are aligned with the problem they are addressing.

The applicant connects state data to national trends in demonstrating comparisons to student performance in reading.

The needs of military children are included in the discussion.

The applicant has provided evidence of prior work in the Washington State communities, as well as demonstrated evidence of collaborative partnerships with other community and educational based-agencies with similar or like-minded goals.

The applicant effectively demonstrates that they have the support and buy-in for the project from local and state educational stakeholders.

The applicant has well-documented and aligned the project goals to train AmeriCorps members to provide evidence-based literacy tutoring to struggling readers in collaboration with school and community partners to help students improve their long-term academic achievement.

Engagement of AmeriCorps members to provide the educational services can support achievement of educational

outcomes.

The applicant provided a consistent and logically-aligned Theory of Change that indicated an appropriate relationship between the inputs, activities, outputs, and short-, medium-, and long-term outcomes.

The applicant provided historical data that demonstrated success for those students serviced by the tutoring programs in the last three years (percentages of those students who have met curriculum benchmarks or achieved grade-level proficiency).

Applicant has implemented ongoing and systematic data collection at the program sites as well as state-level data in order to gauge progress in context of state's educational efforts.

Applicant has realized improvement in students' academic gains for past 3 years and has met or exceeded national performance measures for Tier II students.

The applicant did provide percentages for the previous three years that demonstrated the program's effectiveness in helping students meet curriculum benchmarks or achieving grade-level proficiency (i.e., 56% and 61% respectively).

Weaknesses:

The applicant provided information regarding initiatives implemented by Washington State to address the problem of reading achievement among children, which began in 2005. It was unclear, however, as to whether these initiatives improved the reading achievement levels or whether the lack of improvement provided impetus to augment the existing programs to better serve the targeted student population.

The applicant did not provide any data on the make-up of the 75 targeted schools.

The applicant did not provide any data on the make-up of the targeted population of students who will participate in the intervention program.

State data about students of color and those living in poverty and how they are affected by the problem are absent.

The applicant did not provide a rationale for providing 20-minute tutoring sessions (a minimum three times a week) as a benchmark for effectiveness in helping elementary students become proficient readers.

Although the applicant provided strategies to involve parents in their proposed tutoring intervention, it was unclear as to how their involvement would be assessed or monitored.

The Members' connection to long-term outcomes is inconclusive.

It is not clear why the proposed approach would improve the efforts given there is already considerable investment by state government in addressing these educational shortcomings.

The applicant did not provide any strategies that would be implemented to increase the percentages of those students meeting curriculum benchmarks or achieving grade-level proficiency.